

WASHINGTON D.C. —Today, Congressman Walz applauded Secretary Shinseki's decision to establish a service-connection for Vietnam Veterans suffering from illnesses related to their exposure of Agent Orange.

"I am happy the VA made this decision and want to thank Secretary Shinseki for moving us in the right direction," said Walz. "When our warriors return home, they should always be given the benefit of the doubt, and we have an obligation to ensure that they receive the care and benefits they earned. This decision helps us fulfill the moral responsibility we owe to the men and women who have served this country."

The decision announced yesterday expanded the list of "presumed" illnesses to include ischemic heart disease, hairy cell leukemia and Parkinson's disease. This change means that all service members who served in Vietnam suffering from these illnesses will no longer have the additional burden of proving their illness is connected to their service to our country.

"We are pleased that the VA has made this decision today," said Jim and Terri Graham of Dakota, MN. "We want to thank Congressman Walz not only for his assistance in our case, but his and Chairman Filner's tireless work to correct this injustice for all veterans." Jim is a Vietnam Veteran. He and his wife Terri have been advocates for southern Minnesota veterans and active members of the U.S. Military Veterans with Parkinson's.

Congressman Walz also thanked the U.S. Military Veterans with Parkinson's (USMVP) for their untiring efforts. "I want to thank the USMVP for the positive impact their efforts will have on the lives of Vietnam Veterans. I appreciate the close partnership and assistance they continue to give us as they advocate for our nations' veterans."

Congressman Walz is a co-sponsor of H.R. 2254, the Agent Orange Equity Act of 2009.

-30-